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Twenty-first Century British Anti-capitalism

Joseph Ibrahim

Introduction

This chapter charts the wave of anti-capitalism that has swept Britain in various forms and by different groups from the 1990s through to the first decade of the 21st century. Two major ideologies dominated the British anti-capitalist movement between 2001-2005- anarchism and socialism. Whilst it would be simplistic to claim that all anti-capitalist activists fell into one of these two ideological camps, it is the case that variants of these major ideologies provided the guiding strategy for many activist groups. What is more, the anti-capitalist collective action frame extended beyond groups that were anti-capitalist and led to a developing critique by groups who connected with the anti-neoliberal action frames and themes of social justice. The wave of British anti-capitalism morphed into newer movements and networks, which then led to a veritable ideological division between what could be categorized as anarchist and socialist influenced movements and networks. For example, the anarchist networks, Reclaim The Streets (RTS) and Earth First! (EF) UK gave rise to spin off groups such as Critical Mass, the WOMBLES, the Social Centers Movement, the Squatters movement and the Dissent! network. The Socialist Workers party initiated the anti-war movement in 2001 and 2003 in the form of The Stop the War Coalition (StWC) and Globalise Resistance (GR) in 2001. In 2011, following the

financial crash of 2007-8, a new global movement emerged in the form of Occupy, again this was replete with ideological division but it contained a lot more diversity and variation. Following the collapse of Occupy as a political force in the UK circa 2012, a new upswing of activism took place aligning itself with the left of British parliamentary politics in the form of the campaign group, Momentum.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a potted history of 21st century British anti-capitalism and show how as an ideology it has taken a new form of critique, which has extended into parliamentary politics on an anti-austerity platform. By drawing on data from activist websites, documents and archives as well as previously published material from my own and activist accounts (see Ibrahim 2013; 2015), this chapter can be divided into two main parts. First, it provides the context and background to a new wave of anarchist anti-capitalism that emerged in 1990s through to 2005. Second, it then moves to discuss the rise of the socialist wave including Globalise Resistance and other mass movements heavily influenced by socialism and anti-imperialism, particularly the Stop the War Coalition. At the same time, this part of the chapter also make some observations about where British anti-capitalism is now. Here the paper outlines how anti-capitalist ideas influenced a new model for social justice within the campaign group, Momentum.

Anarchist Britain: A New Wave of Anti-capitalism

Whilst anti-capitalism has existed as long as capitalism as an oppositional phenomenon, social movements come in waves or cycles of contention dependent on grievances, resources, political opportunities and the emergence and spread of

political cultures identity and ideas (Tarrow 2011; Melucci 1996). The particular wave discussed here charts the main groups from the 1990s through to 2005. This new wave of British anti-capitalism started in the early 1990s by anarchist networks such as EF! and RTS. These networks were the initiators of a wave of British anti-capitalist activism that led to spin off groups and inspired other networks to emerge in the pursuit of social justice. To make sense of this wave this paper charts it ideologically and chronologically.

EF! UK and RTS initiated the new wave of British anti-capitalism in the 1990s, which was on an upswing. This spawned the anti-road building movement and carnivals against capitalism. To provide some detail on who EF! UK are, their website states:

The general principles behind Earth First! are non-hierarchical organization and the use of direct action to confront, stop and eventually reverse the forces that are responsible for the destruction of the Earth and its inhabitants. EF! is not a cohesive group or campaign, but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under (Earth First! no date)

And it is important to distinguish it from the US network that started in 1979, as the UK emerged later in 1991 with an explicit non-violent ethos:

In the UK it was successfully started in 1991, and quickly grew, developing it's own distinct character. Initially the biggest campaigns were around imports of tropical timber and anti-roads campaigns, though there were numerous smaller campaigns. Genetic crops, international solidarity, peat and climate change have been other strong campaigns over time. (Earth First! no date)

RTS London emerged around the same time as EF! UK and they are inextricably linked. Activists involved in one network were often involved in the

other. This is not say they are the one and the same, but there was a good degree of overlap and interconnection both in terms of their ideologies and the style of their action repertoires. Ideologically speaking, they are anarchical networks and are anti-consumerist with a clear message on ecology. As the RTS website states:

RTS was originally formed in London in autumn 1991, around the dawn of the anti-roads movement. With the battle for Twyford Down rumbling along in the background, a small group of individuals got together to undertake direct action against the motor car. In their own words they were campaigning: FOR walking cycling and cheap, or free, public transport, and AGAINST cars, roads and the system that pushes them. (Reclaim The Streets; no date)

Part of the action repertoire of both RTS and EF! was the use of satire, spoof newspapers, subvertising and culture jamming. These methods of protesting indicate that they were influenced by earlier 'anarchical' movements such as the Situationist International. Of course, it would be too simplistic to define these groups as purely anarchists, both conceptually and empirically. Conceptually, because anarchism is a broad church ideology that to classify them as such runs the risk of losing nuances of the different variants that were active within and alongside of these networks. Empirically, because some activist who belonged to these networks would not want to define themselves as anarchists or have *any* ideological labels attached to themselves; in fact, some actively avoid it. That said, we need to make sense of the overarching principles that guided and influenced these groups to understand them as a social movement. Therefore, anarchism in the broadest sense was the driving ideology behind these two networks, either explicitly or implicitly. Moreover, the activists I encountered during my research were predominantly 'anarchical' in their outlook and the political values they held (Ibrahim 2013; 2015). That is rejecting all forms of

power, striving for freedom and equality, organizing towards mutual aid, and arguing against capitalism, since they perceived it as an economic system of domination. Furthermore, referring to an ideology as a guiding framework for these activists helps us to understand the distinction between their worldview and other groups, for example, socialist influenced groups, who also emerged later as part of this new wave of anti-capitalism. Who, whilst anti-capitalist, have very different alliances and action repertoires to anarchical groups.

A brief chronology of actions by EF!UK and RTS included the anti-road building protests such as the M3 extension at Twyford in 1992, Bath Easton bypass in 1993, and the Newbury bypass in 1996. EF! UK was more than just anti-road building though, the activists were challenging neo-liberal capitalism generally and although these actions seemed local they were anything but. In fact, a philosophy of think globally, act locally, with an explicit connection between the two informed political actions. As Plows outlines:

The First EF! National actions were rainforest related, with mass demonstrations outside Harwood importers; super quarries in the UK, such as Whatley Quarry, were also the site of mass actions. Activists stopping the bulldozers at Twyford, Newbury and other road protests quickly became aware of how construction companies they were opposing were linked to destructive construction projects globally (Plows 2004: 99).

Reclaim The Streets, who were also part of this wave, held actions between 1995-2001. There was a considerable overlap of the activist base between the EF! and RTS networks. RTS were known for organizing street party protests, festivals, carnivals, and parties on motorways. Their political contention was very similar to EF's! They framed their arguments against growing neoliberal globalization and the

growth in power of supranational institutions that create free trade agreements which benefit the wealthy, encourage an increase in the flow of objects and subjects, leading to an incessant consumerism which in turn leads to an ever increasing search for cheap resources (including oil- which arguably leads to war), exploitation of labor in low wage economies, pollution from transportation of 'cheap' goods facilitated by free trade agreements, leading to the destruction of the planet and climate change.

The impact of free trade policies implemented by supranational institutions were felt acutely in South American countries since at least the 1980s (Walton & Seddon 1994). EF UK! and RTS were aware of these effects and in the 1990s they became involved in the larger network, the Peoples Global Action, which worked with the Zapatistas in Mexico on humanitarian projects and organized the two *encuentros*. The *encuentros* were a call by the Zapatistas against neoliberalism and for humanity. This was a defining moment for the wider alternative globalization movement as it brought together a number of social movements who networked together firstly, in 1996 in Mexico and then in 1997 in Spain (Kingsnorth 2004; Maecklebergh 2009). The Zapatistas essentially created a master collective action frame with which anti-neoliberal groups could identify with, thus creating a transnational solidarity.

Following on from the *encuentros* and continuing with an explicit anti-capitalist politics, the city of London, UK, came to a standstill on June 18th, 1999 when British anti-capitalist networks launched what was termed a 'Carnival Against Capitalism'. It was actually an international day of protest which was planned to run alongside the G8 summit in Cologne, again in keeping with an anti- neoliberal political position- the slogan of the day was 'our resistance is as transnational as capital'. This was a coordinated action involving different networks, as well as RTS and EF!, Corporate

Watch distributed leaflets detailing the locations of financial institutions in London's square mile. Samba bands played, the radical cycle network, Critical Mass, cycled through the city. Their aim, not dissimilar to EF!'s and RTS's was to draw attention to the motor car, the pollution, the demand for oil and arguably the wars it causes, the damage to human life and the environment, and the cycle as an alternative mode of transport- not to mention the dangers cyclists encounter riding around the city of London, especially during rush hour.

A spoof newspaper, *Evading Standards*, (a play on words of Evening Standard) was produced and distributed the day before informing city workers that a financial meltdown was occurring. The city of London came to a standstill as all these coordinated sets of events took place. The event became known as J18, after this there were a number of global days of protest against supranational institutions that also used a shorthand acronym relating to the date of the event. There was N30, on November 30 1999, to coincide with Seattle protests against the WTO summit. This was probably the biggest event since a number of groups including trade unions and organized labor, environmentalists as well as aid organizations. A British contingent as well as European activists attended S26 (September 26, 2000) in Prague, Czech Republic, against the IMF and the World Bank. The next event was one of the most controversial and where feelings of animosity towards elites ran high after an Italian, Black Block activist, Carlo Giuliani, was shot and killed by Italian police in Genoa during the anti-G8 protests in July 2001. This was a notable protest event for activists of the wider anti-capitalist movement because of the violence meted out against activists by the Italian police. Not only was an activist shot and killed but activists were also beaten and arrested when they were not protesting but residing in community centers and other spaces that were regarded as safe. Neale (2002) and

Notes from Nowhere (2003) document some of the accounts from activists who were there. Neale (2002) states that following the death of Carlo Giuliani a mass demonstration took place which brought 300,000 people out on to the streets.

British anarchist groups were present at the events mentioned above, and building on the alliances they made, also started to connect with and or morph into other social groups/ networks and reform according to different political foci. A distinctive anarchist squatter's movement formed in 2003 and linked to this a nationwide autonomist social centers movement came into being in the UK circa 2003. A new network following on from EF! And RTS formed in 2005, called the Dissent network. A little later, No Borders, a network which aims to support migrants and asylum seekers that had a distinctive anarchist edge also emerged. These were significant developments for the anarchist networks in the UK which highlight important political activity within the wider context of British anti-capitalism. I will now unpack each of these new turns to provide a detailed analysis of what their actions and aims were.

Squatting has a long history in the UK from early peasants revolts in 1381, through to movements such as the Diggers in the 17th century, even in the mid twentieth century after World War II a squatters movement emerged because of homelessness. In response to the UK housing crisis during the 1960s a new wave of squatting emerged again. However, it was not until the 1970s when an explicit anti-capitalist squatters movement developed, with a wave of actions by a range of diverse political groups, which included both Trotskyists and anarchists. This was a different movement from earlier family squatters movements, the 1970s activists framed their actions as a political rejection of the current housing system and did not want to work

with the local councils to seek agreements with them to stay. Therefore, squatting is not exclusively an anarchist phenomenon.

However, when analyzing the UK Squatting Archive (1998) from 1998-2003 the squatters' movement is distinctly an anarchists one, which included activists from EF! and RTS. For example, the Manchester chapter of Earth First!, were the main point of contact for the well known anarchist 'OKasional squat café' which was based in Manchester, in 1998. The UK network of squatters, just like the anti-road building networks sought to mobilize outside of official institutions. This sometimes led to many debates within anarchist circles and although it was some times necessary to engage with official institutions, the general position was they would try and not seek permission from or engage with the local authorities.

To some extent this new wave of squatting was influenced by the earlier social centers movement in various parts of Europe, most notably Italy since the 1970s and certainly at the turn of the century. In Italy, social centers were to be found in abandoned buildings including factories and military barracks. Autonomist activists squatted these industrial and military wastelands and made them into free spaces. Often holding events of a social and political nature, including films, legal advice sessions (for example for refugees and migrants), holding public and political meetings to discuss the future of community's needs and wants, sometimes to raise awareness about important political issues around the world, organizing book fairs, access to computers and selling refreshments.

Linked to squatting and the onset of autonomist politics and free spaces in Italy, were the creation of autonomist activist groups and social centers in the UK, circa 2001, the new British autonomist group, The WOMBLES (The White Overall Movement Building Libertarian Effective Struggles) was established. These were

influenced by Italian autonomist groups, Tute Biance and Ya Basta. The action repertoires of these groups at demonstrations is to wear white overalls and heavy padding to confront riot police on demonstrations (Bircham & Charlton 2001). The idea is to protect themselves from anti-riot weaponry whilst trying to break through police lines who are perceived to be protecting political and or corporate elites. Alongside this the UK autonomist social centers movement also emerged around 2003. The social center movement in the UK occupied or rented certain disused or low rent buildings. The centers operate not for profit activities and offer a free political and social space. In Leeds for example a social center- The Common Place- was set up which sold light refreshments, vegan food, it had computers and a small library for people to use. Many events were held that were political in nature such as films from around the world about the struggles of other groups campaigning for autonomy, for example, the Zapatistas. Indeed, fundraising events for the Zapatistas were held and some of the activists involved would visit Mexico and help with humanitarian projects.

The political-ideological composition of social centers are predominantly anarchist in terms of the people who set them up, organized events and who generally worked in them, voluntarily of course. However, the general attendance to events was very mixed and included a number of different people from a wide section of the cities communities. Ideologically speaking, it was also the case that the distinction between say older anarchist groups and the newer autonomist groups were less clear than say in parts of Europe where there can be serious political rivalry. The social centers based on my research showed there to be much overlapping activism and friendship between those who would describe themselves as anarchists and autonomists (Ibrahim 2015). In this sense, social centers were political hubs where

likeminded activists shared political ideas and resources and planned actions. Indeed it was in social centers where regular meetings were held in the run up to summit meetings protests

The Dissent! network was one such example. After its formation at an EF! meeting in 2003, social centers would hold organizational meetings for the network to plan actions. Dissent! brought together a range of anarchist, autonomist and various libertarian groups to organize for a few days of action against the G8 summit meeting to be held in Gleneagles, July 2005. The Dissent! network has roots in older networks such as EF!, RTS and the People's Global Action (PGA) network which was established in 1996 at the Zapatista encuentro. The network is open and is explicitly anti-authoritarian. It does not have a membership list, but is open to those willing to subscribe to the hallmarks of the PGA. These are as follows:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism, all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalization,
2. We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings,
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organizations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker,
4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism,

5. An organizational philosophy based on decentralization and autonomy.
(Smith 2005:161).

When the Dissent! network mobilized for the Gleneagles protests they settled in an eco-camp near Stirling and organized their actions from there. The camp was a similar political set up to the Zapatista idea of a *barrio* (a neighborhood). This is an example of how Dissent! was aligned with autonomist politics and even anarchist notions of mutual aid. Activists were expected to help with the running of the camp, including cooking, cleaning, and abiding by consensus based decision making. Dissent! very much had the hallmarks of anarchical living, albeit a temporary one.

The main actions of Dissent! were to mobilize through affinity groups against the G8 in Scotland, 2- 6 July 2005. The main actions that week included disrupting the MPH march on Saturday 2nd July, by joining the demonstration and holding placards that stated Capitalism Respects Acceptable Protests (CRAP). The political message here was that MPH was allowed to proceed because it very much supported the New Labour Government and the G8 policies towards Africa, which would not bring about an end to poverty. The next included a flash mob in Edinburgh city center at approximately 12pm on July 4 named *The Carnival of Full Enjoyment* and then on the actual summit meeting Wednesday July 6 at Gleneagles.

The protests on 4th July were very much in the style of surrealists akin to situationism, which had been part of the RTS action repertoire for sometime. This was to draw attention to their ideological perspectives which views capitalism as an economic system which encourages citizens to live to work. The idea of the carnival is to subvert and overturn this idea and instead of seeking employment one should embrace *full enjoyment*. This involved a samba band marching in the city center and a number of other activists coming from different directions with stereos playing music.

The police surrounded the first set of activists which caused a blockage on Princes streets, as there were approximately 11 police vans. Activists came in from different directions and then the police found themselves in between and amongst activists and citizens (the latter who were going about their normal everyday business) in the middle of Princes street. The protests continued for a number of hours and later riot police were called in as some protesters started to become more violent throwing objects at the police. Later in the day the protests dispersed, but after the police kettled various groups of protestors and a number of arrests. The majority of the protest went on until early evening around 6pm (Ibrahim 2015). Alongside the Edinburgh protests were the Faslane nuclear base blockade. This is where Trident submarines are kept. From activist accounts, there was a significant overlap between Dissent! and peace activists- CND and Trident Ploughshares. Although these groups are distinct in terms of their politics and activist base there was coalescence around the ideas of being anti-war and against the expense of such weapons. This action and cooperation resulted in the closure of the base for most of the day (Harvie et al 2005).

The next significant set of actions by Dissent! were on 6th July, the day of the summit meeting, which was framed as a global day of protest. Activist writings from Harvie et al (2005) detail that the aim was for activists to mobilize at Gleneagles, where the G8 summit was taking place, and as per the title of the book that outlines Dissent! actions- to Shut Them Down! The following account of events on that day is taken from the afore mentioned book. The Dissent! activists started mobilizing from the convergence centers that they were residing in around 3am the morning of July 6. One particular location was an eco-camp in Stirling, about 20 miles from Gleneagles summit meeting. A number of activists travelled to the Ochil hills to light fires which were named 'Beacons of Dissent!' The idea was that these fires could be seen by the

elites in the Gleneagles hotel as a sign of protest and dissent. Other contingents and affinity groups from the Stirling eco-village/ convergence center left to blockade the M9, which becomes the A9 road to Gleneagles. The aim of this was to try and block the roads for delegates who were attending the summit meeting.

Although there was an overall plan to blockade roads to Gleneagles, this was loosely planned and there was no central direction, which fits with anarchist politics. Therefore affinity groups planned and carried out their own actions and would meet up with other groups or remain separate if they wanted to. Activists from the Edinburgh and Glasgow convergence centers also started to leave at a similar time with the intention to blockade hotels where delegates were staying. According to activist accounts, the Sheraton hotel in Edinburgh was targeted and the Japanese delegates that were staying there were delayed. Later, when the police cleared the blockade and the Japanese delegates were en route, anarchists crashed two cars on the Forth Bridge which delayed the Japanese delegates even further. Because of the blockades on the M9 the Canadian delegates never reached Gleneagles that day (Trocchi, Redwolf and Alamire 2005:86). At Gleneagles itself, a perimeter fence was erected as a barrier to activists. A range of activists not only those as part of Dissent! broke through the fence and then ran up to the inner fence which denotes the red zone. More police were flown in by Chinook helicopters; they made arrests and pushed back the activists back in to the 'safe zone' (Gorringer & Rosie 2008:199).

Dissent! is significant not just in its own right as an anarchist anti-capitalist network, but it was also a response to a renewed and growing socialist contingent who also engaged in anti-capitalist politics and protest. The anarchist networks reigned supreme as *the* anti-capitalists during the late 90s and early 2000s (Carter and Morland 2004) and even gained a certain symbolic dominance for sometime (Ibrahim

2013). However, a socialist challenge emerged, which meant that at certain events: summit meetings, protests and general anti-capitalist rallies, socialist groups with an altogether different politics also started to mobilize broad anti-capitalist issues with groups that anarchists did not. In particular, those groups who opposed the war in Afghanistan and later Iraq and trade unions, and left of UK Labour parliamentarians unhappy with the move to the right following the electoral success of New Labour.

The Socialist Challenge

Although socialist groups were active when the new wave of anti-capitalism emerged at the turn of the century, they were not really part of it. In some ways their action repertoires were seen as outdated and they were not involved in mobilizing for the summit meetings or other protest events (Carter and Morland 2004). However, in 2001 this changed for two main reasons. Firstly, there were a number of leftwing activists with socialist or social democratic views who wished to contest the worst excesses of neoliberal capitalism and the democratic deficit created by supranational political institutions, but who did not fit in with the ideological views of the anarchist groups or their actions. This led to the emergence of newer socialist influenced organizations which were coalitions from a range of left wing activist groups. These included Globalise Resistance and the Socialist alliance. These groups were made up of Socialist Workers Party, Workers Powers, some green activists, trade unionists and independent activists (the latter of which were unaffiliated to any political group). Secondly, the UK government along with the US went to war in Afghanistan following the terrorists attacks of 9/11 in 2001, and it seemed Iraq would also be

targeted as a rogue state soon. Within socialist ideology there is a strong anti-imperialist discourse, and in reference to the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were framed as imperial wars. In particular, the reasons for war on Iraq (that Saddam Hussein, then President of Iraq, had chemical weapons and was a threat) were considered to be a ruse in order to invade the country and capture oil resources (Reza and Rees, 2003). The invasion of Afghanistan led to the creation of the Stop The War Coalition (StWC) and then when it seemed Iraq would be next, the movement grew to produce the largest demonstration in the history of the UK, even estimates from conservative sources were one million (Syalm, Alderson, Milner, 2003).

According to my research (see Ibrahim 2013; 2015), it is the case that Globalise Resistance was created to build alliances between different activists groups that were anti-neoliberal, but did not fit into the anarchist collective action frame. It was also developed to move away from tactics and strategies of older socialist groups that were based around arguments of class struggle. This is not to diminish the importance of class struggle, but rather to reevaluate the way in which postindustrial economies have led to a fragmented class identity through precarious and temporary working conditions. Thus, Globalise Resistance (GR) appealed to a different activist constituent that was anti-capitalist and left-wing but not anarchist. GR emerged from a series of conferences held around the UK with keynote speakers including George Monbiot (a longstanding environmental campaigner and Guardian columnist). Interestingly, he was also dissatisfied with anarchist politics at the turn of the century, but wanted to raise concerns about the environment, social justice, and the problems with neoliberalism (Monbiot 2000).

Following on from the conferences it seemed that GR had a political appeal amongst socialists, social democratic activists, and trade union activists based on

attendance and the political mood at their meetings. From these conferences, GR set up an office in Brick Lane, East London, UK, and headed a multitude of campaigns and mobilizations from there. The structure of GR was very different to the anarchist groups mentioned. They had a steering committee and a defined membership base. They held regular meetings and forums to decide on actions for upcoming events. It seems from their website that there has been no updates from 2014. However, at the start of the 21st century they were very much a presence during British anti-capitalist mobilizations. They had a high profile and presence and attended and or helped organize numerous events. These included being part of Stop the War Coalition from 2001, the first European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence in 2002, the ESF in 2004 which was held in London, the G8 Alternatives in Edinburgh during the G8 summit meeting, July 2005. They brought attention to a range of contentious issues like the arms trade, environmental degradation by corporations, and unethical corporate practices and poor working conditions for employees in ‘sweatshops’. As well as international events, they also brought attention to local issues in London, one of low pay for workers in Canary Wharf who were campaigning for union rights and a living wage (Globalise Resistance 2004). It was GR’s ability to connect up with a wider social base through a wider range of social issues that brought a challenge to the anarchist dominance of the British anti-capitalist politics in the 21st century. The formation of GR and StWC within months of each other led to some ideological competition and conflict between them and the anarchists. The latter accusing the former of being merely front groups for the longstanding socialist organization, the SWP (Schnews 2001a,b).

Whilst both GR and StWC had/have a clear relationship with the SWP and to some extent overlapped in terms of membership base and issues, both organizations

appealed to a much broader activist and citizen base than socialists. The activist base and affiliations of GR have been outlined above. The StWC was even broader still. The SWP were instrumental in setting it up but a range of different people were involved from a number of different groups including left of New Labor politicians (Jeremy Corbyn and George Galloway), the first President of StWC was the late left-wing political activist and former Labour MP, Tony Benn. On the steering committee along with SWP activists such as Lindsey German and John Rees was Andrew Murray of the Communist Party (CP). This is noteworthy since the SWP and CP are in reality political rivals and have very different views. However, these were put aside because of the anti-war collective action frame they share. In addition, the StWC also developed links with the longstanding peace group CND and the religious group, Muslim Association of Britain for the February 15, 2003, demonstration in London.

StWC was also a key part of the anti-G8 mobilization in Edinburgh and Gleneagles, July 2005. They along with other groups formed the G8 Alternatives. This protest coalition was distinct from both the MPH campaign and the Dissent! one mobilizing at the same time. It included around 200 speakers from a number of different groups. For example: The SWP, the Scottish Socialists, George Monbiot, George Galloway of Respect Party, Caroline Lucas of the Green Party, and activists from GR. It helped mobilize thousands of activists throughout the week from Friday July 1 to Wednesday July 6. They held a number of rallies and talks throughout Edinburgh during this time. On the morning of July 6 the day of the summit meeting, attempts by the Edinburgh contingent to reach Gleneagles were thwarted when the police cancelled the pre-booked coaches. This led to an impromptu demonstration in the center of Edinburgh by thousands of activists who were waiting for the coaches but discovered they had been cancelled. Activists also discovered that trains to

Gleneagles had also been cancelled. The coaches were later reinstated but not before the people waiting for transport took to protest in the city center of Edinburgh which then resulted in traffic coming to a standstill for most of the day. Some of the activists did manage to reach Gleneagles after some coaches were reinstated but other decided to stay and carry on demonstrating in Edinburgh.

The broadly speaking socialist anti-capitalist contingent that included the SWP, GR, StWC and the various groups who were part of the mobilization in Gleneagles, The G8 Alternatives , filled a political gap in British left politics. It included those who were anti-war, pro trade union, anti-New Labour and pro-environment. Whilst it could be argued that the anarchist anti-capitalist networks are some of these things, their way of politically organizing are not always understood or accessible to the wider activist populace or indeed the general public. By contrast, the socialist contingent reached a broader populace by working more closely with anti-Blairite trade unions and protesting against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which connected with a significant British public.

From 2001 to 2005, then, British anti-capitalist groups were mobilizing regularly and thus an upswing was happening. Yet, while contentious politics is ongoing it rises and falls according to numerous factors encapsulated within the contentious politics framework of external opportunities, mobilizing resources and cognitive mechanisms (Tarrow 2011). During 2005 to 2009, British anti-capitalism was on a downswing and levels of contention in terms of mobilizing were evident- the flash mobs and large-scale demonstrations subsided. However, another cycle emerged after the financial crash of 2007-8, and groups started to become more visible again. A case in point was through the Climate Camp movement in April 2009 in the city of London against the G20. The political focus was against climate change and against

the banking crisis. The effects of financial crash of 2007-8 started to be felt from 2009 onwards and by September 2011 another upswing of contention against neoliberalism emerged in full flow in the form of the Occupy movement. The occupy movement was of course heavily influenced by Arab Spring and Spanish Indignados earlier in the same year (Kerton 2012).

Over the last 7 years, the effects of austerity policies have started to be felt by sections of the population. These include education cuts to for example Education Maintenance Allowance, the trebling of tuition fees for higher education, the introduction of the bedroom tax, more recently imposition of universal credit. These policies have mobilized a new generation of activists who are not necessarily explicitly anti-capitalist but who are anti-neoliberal and anti-austerity. In response to this, we have seen an electoral challenge through the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader and an increase in membership of the Labour Party from 388,000 in December 2015 to 552,000, as of January 2018 (Audickas, Dempsey and Keen 2018). The campaign group Momentum has managed to mobilize young voters and connect with them through social media effectively which has led to an increase in parliamentary seats for the Labour Party and as a consequence the sitting Conservative government lost their majority. Although the Labor Party is not anti-capitalist in the same sense of the early mobilizations discussed, it is addressing and raising some concerns that challenge the neoliberal orthodoxy that has been in place for over 25 years. To this end, some aspects of the social justice claims making that were apparent within the anti-capitalist movement have extended into a discourse that translates into a social democratic and parliamentary political framework for change.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the main actions, alliances, political formations and ideological compositions of the 21st century British anti-capitalist movement. The anarchist and anarchical mobilizations emerged from the 1990s and went through well into 2005, the new socialist and socialist influenced political mobilizations emerged from 2001 and were galvanized primarily by the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. The former emerged to challenge the incessant consumerism of capitalist Britain and in true anarchist style sought to subvert the status quo, using flashmob tactics, which often took the authorities and corporations by surprise. It seemed during the early 2000s that the only real anti-capitalists were the anarchists, however, there were many groups and citizens on the left who wished to raise attention about different causes or at least in a different way, but not in the old way like some of the longstanding socialists had always done, particularly the A to B march. Britain then saw a new wave of socialist influenced groups, primarily GR and StWC, which brought attention to the use of sweatshop labour, low pay Britain, environmental harm from corporations. The main difference between issues is the action and position on the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. Whilst anarchists would probably agree with the anti-war stance they were not really active on this issue. Both ideological camps have been active throughout the 21st century, but after 2005 there was a veritable downswing and the protests noticeably declined. That said, it is arguable that after the financial crash of 2007-8 and the subsequent austerity policies, a new generation of activists have established a new anti-neoliberal master frame, which argues against austerity and for social justice. The main difference between turn of the century anti-

capitalism and this new left movement in the form of Momentum and some of the current grassroots activists of the Labour Party is that they are seeking parliamentary representation. If austerity and cuts continue in their current way, we may well see a newly elected government that promises to address some of the concerns of the next generation of activists.

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